

Douglas Township

Douglas township officially received its present name on March 8, 1858. It contains about one-half of a civil township with the Des Moines River forming the western boundary. Due to the difficulty of crossing the river at the time of the laying out of the townships, it was decided that two, rather than one township should occupy the area. Elk Rapids and Madrid were the towns laid out within the boundaries of the township. Elk Rapids is no longer in existence while Madrid still occupies its original location.

Charles W. Gaston, the first settler in Douglas Township, is thought to be one of the first permanent residents of the county if not the first. He was a native of the state of Pennsylvania and in 1833 volunteered and became a member of the First Regiment of the United States Dragoons. In 1846 he moved to Boone County and established his home just west of the present site of Madrid. In 1849 he married Anna C. Dalander, the daughter of Mrs. Anna Dalander, the first resident of what is now Madrid. Mr. Gaston had much to do with the plotting of the lots in Swede Point, now Madrid.

The first merchant in Boone County was a Mr. Dawson, who set up a store for the sale of dry goods and groceries. A mill was completed just across the river and this brought people from far and near for breadstuffs. This mill was the first in the county and the first on the Des Moines River north of the Racoon Fork.

In 1851 a Mr. Williams laid out the town of Elk Rapids and in about four years it developed into a fair sized pioneer village. In 1855 the town had three stores and dwellings for about one hundred and fifty people. A post office was established in 1850 and the town continued to grow until disaster struck it. In 1857 a freshet^a carried

the mill away and from that time on the town of Elk Rapids began to decline. Elk Rapids had been laid out in Sec. 34, Township 82, Range 26 and derived its name from the rapids at that point. A village school was built there and remained until 1870.

The first people of foreign birth in the township, and in the county, came from Sweden. This was Mrs. Anna Dalander, her four sons Eric, Peter, Swain, and John, and her two daughters, Ulla and Anna C. Dalander. They came in September, 1846, and settled on Section 36, Township 82, and Range 26. At this place there was a point of timber that projected out upon the prairie. It became known as Swede Point because of the nationality of the people and the natural formation of the land.

Jesse Hull was the third settler in Douglas Township. The Hull family was large and many of their descendants are still living within the township.

On November 27, 1849, a post office was established in the Hull home and it was named Belle's Point. Prior to this time it had been called Hull's Point but as Mrs. Elizabeth Hull was appointed the post-mistress the Government named the office Belle's Point.

In the next few years new families continued to come into the township to make their homes until all of the land was purchased and occupied.

MADRID

The town of Madrid has on file four town plots. The first was surveyed by Thomas Sparks, May 20, 1847 and filed in 1851. The second was surveyed by S. C. Wood in 1853. The Third plot was surveyed by S. Underhill and filed in 1855. The fourth plot was made by L. Regan and filed in 1857.

The interesting thing about all of these surveys is that the first two were made under the name of Swede Point, but between the second and thrid surveys Mrs. Anna Dalander died. Charles was appointed the administrator of her estate and when the third plot was surveyed he changed the name to Madrid. It seems that Mr. Gaston quarreled with the sons of Mrs. Dalander and out of resentment changed the name of the town.

Mr. Gaston had at that time in his employ, a Spainard who often spoke of Madrid, the capital of his native land. Mr. Gaston did not like this Spainard nor his country so, to spite the Swedish brothers, he substituted the Spanish name.

The first merchant in Madrid was William Hopkins who opened a small store on Main Street near where the bridge on that street spans the Milwaukee out. This was the year of 1854. In the years that followed other merchants followed and the town slowly grew. The coming of the railroad in 1880, the town entered into a new era of prosperity.

The religious life of the settlers was not neglected. As early as 1849 a few Swedish settlers met at the house of Mrs. Anna Dalander to sing hymns and offer prayers. One of the group would then read from a book of sermons that had been brought from the old country. This group later organized into the Swedish Lutheran Church in 1859.

Other churches were also being organized during this time: the Christain Church in 1856 and the Methodist Church in 1857.

Madrid built the first village school in 1855 with Rollin Niles, a native of Massachusetts, as the first teacher. A new school was built in 1869, and a third in 1884 which was enlarged in 1901. The present school was built in 1915. *The last addition was in 1963*

The first doctor came to Madrid in the summer of 1855 and remained only two years when he moved to Homer. Other doctors followed so that for most of the time during its growing years Madrid had at least one doctor and one dentist.

There were no lawyers in Madrid until 1881, but the town had a Justice of Peace. Phillip Synder, of Synder Point in Dallas County acted as an attorney for the people of the community and represented them before the Justice of Peace. As he was unable to either read or write, his wife did this for him. In 1881 R. B. Kikes began a law practice in Madrid. C. J. Cederquist, who is still practicing law in Madrid, came from Boone in 1910, where he was county attorney for two terms.

In 1857 C. J. Cassel and the Dalander brothers built the first steam flouring mill not only in Madrid but the first in the county. This mill saved the citizens long drives to more distant mills. However, in 1868 it was sold and was moved to Boone. A second mill was built in Madrid in 1870. The engine used to run the machinery was hauled in a wagon from Keokuk to Elk Rapids in 1855. After being used there for some fifteen years it was moved to Madrid where it was kept in operation for many years.

The first Newspaper published in Madrid was called the Madrid Pilot. Edward Lunt was the first editor and manager. The first issue was August 1881. The Pilot had a short life and was suspended after three months. "It died for want of financial nourishment, having insufficient patronage."

The next year, 1882, M. N. Tomblin began the publication of the Madrid Register which continued until 1887. The paper passed through various hands and was published under a variety of names.

Northwest of Madrid about three miles, "near the breaks of the Des Moines River" (Sec. 15) lived a David E. Allyn. He was a writer, publisher, and trapper. He edited and published two magazines, the Trapper's World and Cameland, both of which were devoted to the trapping interests.

The Madrid post office was established on March 23, 1856. Marcus B. Rutherford was the first postmaster. Although the name of the town had been changed to Madrid in May, 1855, the post office was under the name of Swede Point until 1856.

Madrid was incorporated and held its first city election in 1883. Corydon L. Lucas was the first mayor.

Early in the year of 1857, the leading citizens of the territory now included in the townships of Cass, Douglas and Garden in Boone County, Des Moines Township in Dallas County, and Madison Township in Polk County, made a united effort to form a new county with Madrid as the county seat town. It would have been a small county, but the organizers claimed that it was "unhandy to live so far from the county seats . . . owing to the bad roads and the unbridged streams." The plan was never put into effect due to the fact that the representative of the group, George Hornback, was unable to get to Des Moines before the Legislature had adjourned.

During the Civil War, twenty-nine citizens joined the Union Army, which was a large percentage of the sparse population.

This early history of Madrid is not complete, but it may help the reader to understand some of the beginnings of the community. Later events would include the town's contributions to both World War I and II; the opening of the coal mines which for many years contributed to the prosperity of the community and was responsible for a considerable increase in the population of the community; and the railroad which brought the town a very real era of prosperity when it was first put into operation. It would be impossible in this brief account to refer to all of these events which have made the town of Madrid what it is today.